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*Official Records*

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New York

*President*: Mr. Essy ..... (Côte d'Ivoire)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Agenda item 95** *(continued)*

**Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family**

**International Conference on Families**

**The President** *(interpretation from French)*: I call on the Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations, Ambassador Fernando Guillen Salas.

**Mr. Guillen** (Peru) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: At the outset allow me to express our support for the statement made by the Ambassador of Paraguay on behalf of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

We have come here today to reaffirm the importance of the family as the basic building-block of society, the social group in which the human person is reproduced. We wish to stress the fact that the family plays the important role of giving society new members who can play an appropriate and constructive part in its social activities. Thanks to the family, societies are renewed and transmit their special characteristics from one generation to the next. It is the family that passes on the culture, and the history, thereby ensuring the continuity of a people.

There is a world-wide crisis of values. In Peru the danger of social disintegration has been aggravated by a prolonged socio-economic crisis, which, fortunately, is being overcome. There have been other causes also — demographic problems, migratory phenomena and urban sprawl. All of these factors have a negative effect on the harmonious development of the family and tend to its breakdown.

The extreme poverty suffered by most of our population, which is related to the lack of basic services, is a factor that threatens the family. It deserves particular attention because it increases the vulnerability of the most vulnerable sectors, particularly women and children.

Two decades of terrorist violence and drug trafficking and the corruption ensuing therefrom, have also contributed seriously to the breakdown of the family. For that reason we Peruvians enthusiastically hail the national victory over terrorism and the Government's resolution to combat drug trafficking.

At this stage of its history, Peruvian society, which is multicultural, is becoming more closely knit and is acquiring a greater degree of communication, all of which will help to define the image of the new Peruvian citizen. This will eventually bring about the integration of the two most important cultural currents underlying a society that is the oldest of all in South America. These two formative cultural influences share the belief in the intrinsic value of the family for society.

The present effort being carried out by Peru in support of the family and its essential role in the integral

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development of the human person and in the development of the country as a whole can be divided into two areas of action.

In the sectoral area, I wish to mention in particular the following initiatives: programmes for health care, with emphasis on the care of mothers and children through pre- and post-natal monitoring programmes, breast-feeding, monitoring of the growth and development of the child, and vaccination campaigns, among others; educational programmes with special attention to helping working mothers by setting up the national programme of *wawa wasis* — children's homes — and the integrated programme of education for life; food-support programmes through the "glass-of-milk programme" which seeks to provide children and expectant and nursing mothers with the nutritional supplements that they need; constitutional recognition of the importance of the family as the building-block of society, and an up-to-date set of legal regulations that is in conformity with reality, the institution of the family, matrimony, cohabitation and the rights that arise from the inheritance laws, legal measures for the protection of the family, and regulations governing family property, among others; a broad-based programme focusing on basic multisector social expenditure that gives priority to intervention in favour of the neediest families in rural areas and in the marginal city areas, improving the quality of coverage and the efficiency of basic social expenditure for services in education, basic justice, health, and supplementary nutrition; and the programme of support for revitalization of the population in the poorest areas of the country.

As regards institutions, I wish to emphasize the following basic ideas and initiatives carried out by the National Institute for Family Welfare.

The main goal of the Institute is to strengthen the family, fostering the development and improvement of conditions for the family, ensuring its integrated development in a climate of harmony, respect for the culture and the values of each group of people, and accepting the challenge of providing them with training to give them the capacity to become useful beings for society and for themselves.

The Institute has as its premise the idea that neither violence nor poverty can justify the breakdown of family ties, which are the sole guarantee of the training of responsible adults who can play a useful part in society. Similarly, it is aware that Peruvian families are carrying out new forms of survival through self-management organizations that enable them to face the social, economic and moral crisis in a spirit of solidarity, playing the leading role that is theirs within the process of social change. In regard to this group, special mention should be made of the active role played by Peruvian women in the struggle to improve living conditions and chances of survival in the poorest sectors of the country.

Combining family well-being and active participation by the community, the Institute works on the basis of two programmatic approaches.

First, there is the furtherance of social welfare directed towards the carrying out of preventive and promotional programmes, giving priority to the value of the family as the initial formative force in the development of the human person, emphasizing services for minors, the elderly, the family and the community, and promoting active organized participation by its members.

Secondly, there is the programmatic aspect of the social integration of children and adolescents who are in especially difficult circumstances. Special attention is directed towards the problems of children and adolescents from birth to 18 years of age in cases where they have difficulties in achieving integrated development because of bio-psycho-social deficiencies. These are minors who have been abandoned, who are in moral danger, who have behavioural problems or who are on the fringes of the law. Basic clothing, housing and health care are provided to all of them as well as psychological assistance, socio-familial, behavioural, educational and specialized labour assistance. An effort is being made to help them adopt acceptable patterns of social behaviour so that they can become reintegrated into society and the family.

Peru is taking resolute action to resolve the urgent problems of its population. The consolidation of democracy and progress in economic restructuring, the recovery of peace and growth now make it possible for my country to give social problems, and within social problems the strengthening of the family, the priority that they deserve. I wish to emphasize along these lines that we are seeking the implementation of a holistic approach that articulates economic, social and pacification policies in a rational way.

**The President** *(interpretation from French)*: I now call on Her Excellency, Mrs. Miriam Sirelkhatim, State Minister, Ministry of Social Planning of the Sudan.

**Mrs. Sirelkhatim** (Sudan) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: From a homeland where family values reign, I should like to greet you, Mr. President, on behalf of Sudan, its people and its Government. I should like to hail the interest accorded by the international community to the family, as reflected by the holding of this meeting at such a high level of representation in this international forum.

The family is the nucleus of society and its solid foundation. It is the ideal environment for character-building. We think that the family is useful to the extent that it follows moral criteria for selecting spouses on the basis of piety and love between the spouses. The two spouses should educate their children on the basis of piety, without discriminating in any way between girls and boys, so that they may grow up imbued with positive moral values, proper behaviour and generosity.

Social and moral values should be inculcated in children, who should be given opportunities for proper interaction with their entire environment, beginning with their parents and including their neighbours and society as a whole. They should also receive a proper education and enjoy a happy childhood as members of society and in their immediate environment. They should, then, be aware of the society that surrounds them and respect it through, for example, acquiring a love of art and beauty. Children should also understand the munificence of the universe and the importance for human beings of following the proper path and preserving the environment, as well as the need to love their work, their neighbour and their homeland.

Children should be brought up to have a positive attitude towards all humanity and should be imbued with a spirit of sacrifice and generosity. Open-minded dialogue and social interaction should help them follow the path of righteousness and avoid evil. They should accept diversity and differences of opinion, and they should be generous. These are also values which they should be taught to acquire.

In Sudan we are proud of our social cohesion and social interdependence. The family enjoys a special place in our society, which is characterized by relatively large families. The State treats the family as part of its national and comprehensive strategy. Furthermore, the Ministry for Social Planning was created in order to develop society on the basis of a global concept. It is the largest Ministry in Sudan.

In addition, family councils have been set up with the aim of helping couples who wish to get married to obtain the necessary resources, for example, through communal marriages ceremonies. Special councils have been set up in order to organize such communal marriage ceremonies.

In 1994, the Sudanese State attached great importance to the celebration of the International Year of the Family, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/237. In this connection, the Minister for Social Planning issued ministerial decree number 21 of 1994 to create a national committee under the chairmanship of the Minister of State for Social Planning within the framework of the International Year's official celebration. The committee's functions include providing for the protection of the family, ensuring social justice and cohesion and securing prosperity of our citizens on the basis of full respect for their economic and social rights. The committee is also concerned with the protection of the child.

Rural and immigrant families also receive enjoy special assistance. Special training programmes for the women of such families have been introduced. It is hoped that, on 31 October 1994, there will be a special colloquium in Khartoum on the social and human aspects of the Sudanese family.

As part of the interest shown in the family, vulnerable families and orphans are cared for by the State. A ministerial decree has been issued on the provision of assistance to orphans and their mothers. General guidelines have been laid down accordingly in order, *inter alia*, to develop the means of funding, data and statistics gathering and reviewing existing legislation. The Sudanese State has undertaken an ambitious plan of protection that covers children who live in precarious circumstances, especially those of refugees. Medical assistance and education are given to these children. In this regard, I should like to appeal to the international community to provide the necessary assistance so that those children who have been kidnapped by the rebel movement might be able to return to Sudan and to their families. Those children were in fact taken away by force. We would like to appeal to the international community to condemn these acts.

A council for productive families has been set up to assist such families. The council helps those families to market their products and, thereby to improve their standard of living. The high-level committee for productive families has held intensive meetings, and 300

million Sudanese pounds have been allocated to projects for families involved in production.

The Sudanese Government has declared the year 1994 the year for providing all families with clothing. To this end, a special committee has been set up by a presidential decree. The Sudanese people at large have been urged to give their unwanted clothes to the needy. The committee has begun its work under the chairmanship of the President's Office of the Republic, the speaker of the National Assembly and various federal ministers. The Committee has done very good work so far and has provided a large number of people with much-needed clothing under the slogan: "Clothing for All".

The special attention my country devotes to women, has ensured for women the enjoyment of the same political rights, education and medical care as men. Salaries are equal for equal work. Women have also achieved high-level status within government. Sixty-five per cent of girls receive an education, in the context of our interest in women as spouses and mothers.

As to education, my country has focused on the eradication of illiteracy. In the western part of the country, we have achieved a 100 per cent literacy rate. University education is also expanding on a large scale. As to medical services and family planning, campaigns have been launched, especially in rural areas, to distribute medicine to children and pregnant women. Meetings and campaigns have been organized on health care for women and families. I am particularly proud to state that my country has been commended by the United Nations Children's Fund for its vaccination campaign, in which 85 per cent of our children have been immunized.

As to the protection of the environment, the Sudanese State is developing alternative energy resources and making it possible for families to earn a living without damaging the environment. For example, the use of solar cooking is being encouraged.

The handicapped also enjoy special attention from the Sudanese Government. They enjoy all rights without discrimination. In spite of the limited resources at the disposal of the State, opportunities for education and professional training are provided and we hope that international assistance will increase, and this makes it possible for the disabled to be fully reintegrated into society. The State is making a particular effort to provide vaccines, especially against polio. As a result, there has been a considerable reduction in the number of victims of that crippling disease. With a view to protecting the family, the Sudanese State has raised the slogan of "sports for all", so that all citizens may lead a healthy life. The elderly, for their part, are protected by the Sudanese State and enjoy great respect in our society, especially as our religion urges us to respect our elders, as well as our neighbours, the poor, orphans and the disinherited.

As we celebrate the International Year of the Family, we hope that we are laying the foundations for a united family, the building block of tomorrow's society. We must imbue our families with moral values and abolish social discrimination on the basis of religion, ethnicity or culture. Moral values ensure the cohesion of society and should be consolidated. Social protection for all should be ensured through education, rehabilitation, medical services, clothing, food and proper housing. We cannot achieve this without an international commitment to these objectives. We are proud to propose the idea of a productive family, which would contribute to solving the problem of poverty in the world. It is with great pride that we propose the moral values of Sudan as the best model for families throughout the world.

**Programme of work**

**The President** *(interpretation from French):* I should like to inform representatives that draft resolution A/49/L.5, entitled "Twenty-fifth anniversary of the operations of the United Nations Population Fund" has been circulated in the Hall this afternoon and will be considered tomorrow, Thursday, 20 October, in the morning.

I should also like to inform delegations that on Friday, 21 October 1994, in the morning, the Assembly will consider agenda item 21, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States", agenda item 29, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Latin American Economic System", and sub-item (b) of agenda item 16, "Election of seven members of the Committee for Programme and Coordination".

In the afternoon the Assembly will hold the debate on agenda item 89(d), "Elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa".

**Agenda item 95 *(continued)***

**Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family**

**International Conference on Families**

**The President** *(interpretation from French):* I call next on the representative of Pakistan, Mr. Jan Ali Junejo.

**Mr. Junejo** (Pakistan): Pakistan welcomes the holding of the International Conference on Families. We convey our appreciation to the secretariat of the International Year of the Family for making the Year a success. This Conference provides us with an opportunity to review the activities of the International Year of the Family and to discuss ways and means of putting together a comprehensive and cohesive programme for follow-up to the Year.

All United Nations instruments refer to the family as the basic unit of society. It therefore has a key role in making or unmaking a society or defining its strengths and weaknesses. It is the responsibility of Governments to protect and assist families and to promote their inherent strengths to enable them to function as self-reliant and self-sustaining units in communities and nations. The International Bill of Human Rights provides an excellent framework for achieving these objectives.

The centrality of the family to the development of the human individual was one of the themes highlighted by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in her statement at the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo recently. The Prime Minister stressed:

> "The traditional family is the basic unit on which any society rests. It is the anchor on which the individual relies as he embarks upon the journey of life. Islam aims at harmonious lives built upon a bedrock of conjugal fidelity and parental responsibility."

We should underscore the critical need for the family to receive comprehensive support and protection.

The Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development has reiterated the importance of the family in society. Principle 9 and chapter V of that Programme deal not only with the definition of the family but also with issues such as the effect on the family unit of greater participation by women in the labour force; widespread migration; and forced population shifts caused by violent conflict or war, urbanization, poverty, natural disasters or other causes of displacement. In our deliberations today we should build upon the international consensus on these issues.

The objectives of the International Year of the Family have also received substantive support from the World Conference on Human Rights. The final document adopted by the human rights Conference addressed individual human rights in the context of family relationships and emphasized the positive role that families can play in the promotion and protection of human rights.

We should maintain the momentum generated by those Conferences and by the activities held in observance of the International Year of the Family. The forthcoming World Summit for Social Development, the United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders and the Fourth World Conference on Women all present valuable opportunities for placing the role of the family in its rightful context. We should strengthen the family-related components of the declarations and programmes of action of those conferences. At the World Summit for Social Development, we should try to build consensus for generating additional resources to eradicate the poverty and unemployment affecting the poorest families in the world.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his message on the occasion of the launching of the Year, pointed out that families had only recently become the focus of international attention, both as major agents and as beneficiaries of sustainable development. When we look back, we note with satisfaction that observance of the International Year of the Family has achieved considerable progress in enhancing awareness of family issues among Governments and all other actors of civil society. During the Year, special attention has been paid to the economic, social and demographic factors affecting families. However, the more important and difficult tasks of strengthening national institutions and international cooperation to address and solve these problems require consistent, resolute and coherent efforts.

Today, families all over the world are experiencing considerable change. In the developed countries, the civilization of the post-industrial era is searching for appropriate models for the family. In the developing countries, the main problem is the survival of the

majority of families, who live below the poverty line. The deteriorating economic situation in the poor countries, migration, urbanization and population growth have created serious material and spiritual crises for the family. Constantly changing economic and social structures have thrown up new challenges that are beyond the capacity of traditional systems. The families affected need the help of their Governments and of the international community.

Families provide emotional support and serve to nurture social and economic well-being. They define and shape the cultural ethos of a society and transmit societal values from one generation to the next. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that all members of the family — women, children, youth, the elderly and disabled persons — should be protected from exploitation, violence and abuse. We should promote a culture of respect for the rights of women, of the protection and development of children and of care for the elderly, the disabled and the infirm. Governments, private enterprises, non-governmental organizations and international agencies should formulate and implement "family-sensitive" policies so that the family may be enabled to act as a medium for promoting healthy values and socio-economic development.

*Mrs. Hoenigsperger (Austria), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

The structural adjustment programmes imposed in the developing countries often result in the retrenchment of essential social services. They place increasing burdens on the family, particularly on women, children and other vulnerable family members. Priority must be given to encouraging and strengthening the fledgling social support systems that ensure the basic conditions for the development of a family.

The income-generating capacities of families, which are so crucial, can be strengthened in a stable, progressive and vibrant economic environment. The majority of the developing countries, trapped in a vicious circle of heavy debts, dwindling economic assistance, inequitable trade regimes and inadequate investment, cannot hope to ensure better living standards for their families. The United Nations, its specialized agencies and the international community should implement national efforts to eradicate illiteracy, provide basic health care and implement population welfare programmes.

The International Year of the Family has not been able to focus adequately on the plight of families living in conditions of war, armed conflict and civil strife. In Bosnia, Palestine, Kashmir, Rwanda, Azerbaijan and many other parts of the world, families have suffered collectively as a result of repression and atrocities. In 1994 alone, hundreds of thousands of people were killed; women were raped; children were mutilated and killed; and homes were destroyed. Particularly vicious has been the practice of State-sponsored violence against innocent families in order to humiliate and terrorize entire communities. Rape has been used as an instrument of war. The Year should have been an occasion to express the international community's strong moral condemnation of these atrocities, but the focus, regrettably, has remained only on stable or quasi-stable societies. The movement of refugees and displaced persons fleeing oppression or environmental degradation has resulted in the disruption of these family units everywhere in the world. In addition, immigrant workers worldwide are facing increasing discrimination and persecution.

We urge all Member States, while finalizing specific proposals for the implementation of the follow-up to the Year, to make provisions for the return and rehabilitation of families traumatized and victimized during armed conflicts and civil strife.

Families in different parts of the world face different impediments in realizing their full potential for development. Our experience in Pakistan has been that efforts in the legal, educational and cultural spheres can yield significant results. In this context, conscious of the role of women in family structures, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, has taken a personal interest in putting an end to domestic violence against women. Under her leadership, the Government is committed to ensuring equal rights for men and women. We are committed to repealing all discriminatory laws and to signing the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

As a first step towards the empowerment of women, 25 seats have been reserved for women in the National Assembly of Pakistan, and a specific percentage of government jobs has been earmarked for women. The legal protection of women, along with their economic empowerment, can play a significant role in strengthening families. Recently, we launched a project to increase the representation of women in the criminal justice administration. Incentives have been given to non-governmental organizations to undertake projects at the grass-roots level on a public-private partnership basis. In national development planning, priority has been assigned

to health care, employment generation and population welfare.

I must also add that Pakistan, as one of the co-initiators of the World Summit for Children, attaches special importance to the implementation of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children.

The International Year of the Family is a significant starting- point for a long-term process. When the Year is over, we hope that the family, the essential component of all healthy societies, will not be forgotten by Governments and international agencies.

**The President:** I call next on the representative of Mongolia, Mr. L. Bayart, Director of the International Organizations Department of the Ministry of External Relations of Mongolia.

**Mr. Bayart** (Mongolia): We have gathered here to discuss the status of world-wide activities in observance of the International Year of the Family and to set guidelines for further global action in support of families. In our view, the high policy-making level of participants is ample evidence of increased public and international awareness of the family issue and of the recognition by the community of nations of its far-reaching importance.

As we come closer to the end of the International Year of the Family we have a good opportunity to sum up the work already accomplished, identify major challenges that lie ahead and forge the necessary global consensus towards articulating forward-looking strategies for the good of families. The observance of the Year should, indeed, lead to a long-term process of integrating a more pronounced family component into both national development strategies and international cooperation.

It is heartening to note that in response to the United Nations initiative more than 150 countries have set up national coordinating bodies and formulated relevant plans of action in preparation for and observance of the Year. National efforts are being complemented by specific measures at the regional and international levels. A crucially important contribution was the holding of four regional and interregional preparatory meetings for the Year, which developed specific action-oriented recommendations. Here, I wish to take note of the Beijing Declaration on the Family in Asia and the Pacific adopted by the United Nations Asia and the Pacific preparatory meeting for the Year, held in May 1993.

The United Nations is in the vanguard of this global movement, as a number of its entities have been actively engaged in an intensive and coordinated preparatory process. My delegation wishes to commend the work being done by the secretariat for the International Year of the Family and its Coordinator, Mr. Henryk Sakolski, to set in motion a concerted campaign and provide organizational and substantive support to numerous initiatives around the world.

An impressive array of non-governmental organizations have throughout been our important partners in the preparation for and observance of the Year. Here special mention should in our view be made of the World Forum of non-governmental organizations on launching the International Year of the Family, a major global convocation of non-governmental organizations held in Malta late last year.

Worldwide, the family has been undergoing constant transformation resulting from social and cultural changes, economic upheavals and the pressures of modernization and development. Traditional definitions of family structure based on two major types, nuclear and extended families, are being enriched with the emergence of new family types such as cohabitation, same-gender relationships and single-parent and reorganized families. Although such changes differ from country to country, the fundamental function of the family as a basic unit in society remains unchanged. And, as such, families provide the fullest reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of the social and developmental welfare environment, thereby offering a uniquely comprehensive human-centred approach to development, and to social issues in particular. In this sense, we believe that major upcoming world events such as the Social Summit and the international conferences on women and on human settlements should give due consideration to the family component in formulating their strategies and programmes of action.

We welcome the opportunity offered by the International Year of the Family to focus attention on the numerous family issues, and in particular on that of vulnerable families. Single-parent families, especially the growing number of households headed by females, are among the poorest. It is estimated that one third of all families are now single-parent families where a woman is the sole bread-winner. The poverty level of families with disabled members is also high. Labour migration to secure a livelihood is frequently a source of family tension and disintegration. Refugee and internationally

displaced families are another group of families at risk. Families affected by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) require particular attention. Family breakdown is reflected in increasing domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, sexual abuse, and child abuse and neglect. There is still much to be done to raise awareness of these problems with a view to addressing them adequately. With that in view, my delegation believes that the international community should now actively work to formulate a sound follow-up of the Year to sustain its momentum.

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/82, which proclaimed 1994 the International Year of the Family, the focus of activities for observance of the Year is at the local and national levels. In Mongolia as in many other countries, a national committee for the International Year of the Family was set up earlier this year. The Committee is headed by the Minister of Population and Labour and is composed of representatives of key Government ministries, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the mass media. At its first meeting the Committee adopted a national plan of action, which includes the following elements, among others: review of existing family legislation and enactment of new laws on the rights of children and the aged; formulation of a comprehensive national policy designed to strengthen and support families; launching of research campaigns under the themes "Family and population development", "Family and equality", "Family households under a market economy", "Family concepts and the traditional way of life of Mongols", and others; organization of a national conference on the protection of maternal and child health and the family; establishment of family-counselling centres in rural and urban areas; nationwide observance of 15 May as the International Day of the Family to promote awareness of the Year's objectives and of national priorities; and a series of mass-media publications and radio and television broadcasts on the global and national activities to observe the Year.

National preparatory activities helped to reveal more vividly the existence of acute family-related problems. Their predominant causes can be largely ascribed to the upheavals of transition. Dismantling of the old system of economic governance, coupled with the abrupt disruption of the external economic and trade environment, resulted in a sharp economic decline, and the emergence of such social evils as poverty and unemployment. Aside from the economic sphere, the transition process involves the social, cultural and spiritual life of Mongols, bringing with it other, no lesser challenges, including, *inter alia*, the deterioration of the social safety net and the educational system. All these factors have caused a marked decline in the living standards of the population, which directly affects the well-being of families. Fully aware of the existing situation, the Government of Mongolia is taking bold measures, allocating more than 20 per cent of its budget to human-priority concerns and executing strategies to improve the status of children, women, the aged and other vulnerable groups.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to express its full support for the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its commitment to promoting them further.

**The President**: I call next on the representative of New Zealand, Mr. John McKinnon.

**Mr. McKinnon** (New Zealand): The symbol chosen as the logo for the International Year of the Family, a heart sheltered by a roof, is an apt one. Nineteen ninety-four, the International Year of the Family, has been taken to heart in New Zealand. There has been celebration of the fundamental role played by the family in all its diverse forms. There has been work, looking at issues important to the place of the family in our community. These activities will help us carry forward the aims of the International Year. They will make a difference to family participation in our society.

New Zealand's participation in the Year has been substantial. Through Government funding, an International Year of the Family Committee was appointed early in October 1993. Prominent New Zealanders active in providing services to families were invited to form this Committee, which worked in liaison with the Department of Social Welfare.

The Government recognized the importance of the United Nations objectives for the Year in stimulating local, national and international action as part of a sustained long-term effort to increase awareness of family issues and highlight the importance of families. The New Zealand Committee had two primary objectives: first, to reinforce that the family is the principal medium for the socialization, education, care and protection of children; and, secondly, to provide an education programme on ways to promote and access services for families across all the programmes available both in the Government and in the voluntary sectors in New Zealand.

To fulfil these objectives the Committee identified three key activity areas. Generating awareness was the first, the second was facilitating community activity and the third was information-gathering.

There is certainly a high level of awareness of the Year in New Zealand. It was launched at dawn on 1 January 1994 in Gisborne, the first city in the world to greet the new year and the new day. The ceremony involved Ministers, media, personalities and the leaders from the Maori community. The national theme song for the Year, "Good for Life", by a prominent New Zealand band, has become familiar to most of our people. The theme statement, "The family is good for life", has aided the promotion of the Year, and a related theme is adopted for each month of 1994. Research in July suggested that 85 per cent of adults were aware of the International Year. Community activity for the Year has been sustained through several initiatives. Twenty "honourary ambassadors" were appointed for the Year. These were prominent New Zealanders involved in promoting the Year nationally and locally. Additionally, International Year of the Family coordinators were appointed by local governments.

In the area of information-gathering, the major research project commissioned by the Government of New Zealand for the International Year of the Family has been particularly important. The project is called "Accessing Family Services". It is founded on the Government's concern that families should have appropriate access to effective and coordinated sources of help and advice in times of family crisis. Research into how the agencies providing these services communicate with their clients has been undertaken, as has consumer research in local communities. As a result, information programmes relating to a broad range of services nationally are expected to be revised, augmented and monitored on a continuing basis. So, the project will contribute significantly to the empowerment of families within society and have long-term benefits.

Just as important as the Government's input has been the community response to the Year in New Zealand. It is this that has made the Year for us. Thirty community-initiated projects for the Year have been funded from an allocation by the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board. They have included family violence intervention projects, cultural specific services and parent support projects. An illustration is a pilot project on parenting skills based on *kaupapa Maori*, or Maori cultural principles.

And so, at the conclusion of the International Year of the Family, it is particularly heartening to be able to say that new services are becoming available to families, as well as increased information about existing services. Research on family issues initiated during the Year continues in academic institutions. Recent policy emphasis on promoting and supporting the role of families in society has been reinforced for the future. This includes innovative legislation passed in 1989 for involving extended families in decision-making in child welfare cases.

New Zealand looks forward to the visit of Mr. Henryk Sakolski, Coordinator for the International Year of the Family, in early December. We are delighted that Mr. Sakolski will be giving the keynote address at an international conference in Auckland on strengthening families. We expect the conference's results to feed directly into Government policy development processes, together with the outcomes of other International Year of the Family initiatives.

We have also been pleased to be able to contribute internationally to the Year, including through funding several International Year of the Family projects in the South and South-East Asia region. Studies relating to literacy in the Jaipur district in India and to the families of street children in the Philippines were two such projects. We were also pleased to fund a women's entrepreneurship development programme in India.

The Year is an opportunity to promote new awareness of the multiple crises that families anywhere can face and of what can be done to avert them. Families around the world vary in their form and structure. Many differing strengths come from this diversity. Building on the basis of such differences is particularly relevant as we move towards 1995, the United Nations Year for Tolerance.

We are hopeful that the tangible benefits of the many activities carried out world-wide during the course of the International Year of the Family will continue to be realized over time. We have seen the central role of women in development highlighted in the context of the United Nations Conference on Population and Development. We will continue to look for emphasis to be placed on the situation of women, children, youth, ageing persons, disabled persons and indigenous people in the context of preparations for the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen next year.

We firmly believe that there must be a strong focus on the role of the family if the many and complex social issues faced by societies today are to be addressed successfully. Let us hope that families in countries that are themselves in crisis will also gradually benefit from the understanding and support of those in more fortunate circumstances. The importance of the family to nations' survival cannot be underestimated. We salute the international humanitarian agencies engaged in working in these situations, where families are very often disempowered and fragmented.

We must now work to ensure that the efforts made during 1994 to recognize, support and celebrate the role of the family have a continuing influence on the international social agenda.

Finally, let me return to the image of the United Nations logo for the Year. The roof over the heart can symbolize the shelter given to the individual within his or her family. It may also stand for the recognition and support our societies can give to the families within them, with their diverse forms and faces.

**The President:** I call next on the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mr. Mohamed A. Azwai.

**Mr. Azwai** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(interpretation from Arabic):* The celebration of the International Year of the Family in 1994 reflects the international community's awareness, as represented by this General Assembly of the United Nations, that the family is the embodiment at the popular level of all the strengths and weaknesses in the fields of social and developmental welfare in society and that it provides society with a uniquely comprehensive means of tackling all social issues. There is also the awareness that the family is the fundamental social unit and the principal and effective factor in the process of development at every level.

This celebration also reflects the awareness of the international community that the family, as the fundamental social unit, faces the threat of deterioration and disintegration today as a result of a number of social, economic and political factors and due to the many conflicts and wars now raging in many parts of the world. Such factors have led to the destruction and disintegration of thousands of families. In addition, there has been the impact of economic pressures arising from the dire poverty in which millions of families live in all parts of the world. This makes it incumbent upon us not to be content with celebrating but rather to focus on setting up practical programmes for protecting and developing the family and eliminating those threats to its stability and survival.

We in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya believe that an individual without family has no meaning and no social life and that if human society sinks to the point where men exist and develop outside the family, it will turn into a gathering of lost, uprooted hoboes. The unspeakable things we witness nowadays, such as vagrancy, juvenile delinquency, the trade in children, their prostitution, pornography, the spread of drugs and AIDS, are all causes and effects of the disintegration of the family. Now the international community has the opportunity afforded by a number of forthcoming international conferences to remedy those grave social ills, particularly during the World Summit on Social Development in Denmark and the World Conference on Women in Beijing next year.

Libya's concern with the family and its protection is not a thing of the recent past. It has very deep roots in the traditions of my country, as well as in the Arab-Islamic culture to which we belong. Libyan legislation therefore contains many laws on the protection of the family. The law decrees that every individual has the right to form a family. All minors whose families have been lost or have disintegrated for any reason, as well as the handicapped, the infirm and the aged, have the right to full social welfare. The Libyan penal code further includes laws for penalties against crimes perpetrated against the family, such as the failure to meet family obligations, the abuse of corporal punishment and the abuse of children or of any members of the family, as well as penalties against the perpetrators of crimes against the moral values of families and crimes that threaten the existence of the family.

The green Charter on Human Rights adopted by the Peoples' Congress in June 1988 includes a number of articles concerning the importance of the family and the need to protect it, in the interests of the individual and of society. In paragraph 20, it provides that it is one of man's sacred rights to grow up in a family of father, mother and siblings. Article 25 of the Law on the Promotion of Liberty provides for the right of every individual citizen to form a family.

It is truly ironic that while celebrating the year declared by the Assembly as the International Year of the Family, the Libyan family and Libyan society should suffer from international sanctions imposed by one of the

organs of this very Organization, namely the Security Council. Those sanctions have led to grave human suffering to Libyan families owing to the lack of medicines and of possibilities of treatment, which led to the delay in vaccinating thousands of children and the death of a number of those awaiting permission to go abroad for treatment. Entire families have been lost because of road accidents, roads having become the main means of transport in the country. All this befell the Libyan family while Libya has been celebrating the International Year of the Family! We appeal to this august Assembly immediately to lift these unjust, unjustifiable sanctions.

The suffering of the Libyan family came as a result of the political hegemony of certain States on this international Organization. They have not stopped there. Indeed, they are attempting through this Organization and other international forums and meetings to impose their culture and values on other nations and cultures, including the imposition of rather strange forms of the family unit which are unacceptable to societies and cultures that are much older and which cannot accept that any State or culture has the right to try and impose itself and its culture on other peoples.

Finally, my country hopes that the International Year of the Family and the present discussion will be the start of an effort to promote and protect the family from dislocation and disintegration, so that we may create a happy, humane society in which peoples would cooperate in fraternity, peace and equality.

**The President:** The next speaker is the Minister for Social and Women's Affairs of Cameroon, Mrs. Yaou Aissatou, upon whom I now call.

**Mrs. Aissatou** (Cameroon) *(interpretation from French):* Speaking on behalf of the Republic of Cameroon at this important International Conference on Families, I am pleased and proud to note that the Conference affords us an opportunity to restore the human person to a central, rightful place in the development process.

That said, I should like to begin by thanking Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General, for having decided to organize this special gathering devoted to families and for having incorporated it into the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

I should also like to express our appreciation to Mr. Henryk Sakolski, Coordinator of the permanent secretariat of the International Year of the Family, and all his team for the effective manner in which they are supervising the events marking the celebration of the Year.

I should also like to join previous speakers in extending very sincere congratulations to the President and other officers of the Conference on their well-deserved election and to assure them of our full cooperation in successfully completing our work.

In Cameroon the family, whatever form it may take as a result of the socio-cultural outlook of local communities, is viewed as the basic unit of society. Whether monogamous or polygamous, nuclear, extended or single-parent, the family in Cameroon has as its fundamental purpose providing the first milieu for the socialization of the child. Under the Constitution, the State has the duty to protect and promote the family so that it can play a useful part in implementing national population policy, whose ultimate goal is the promotion of a quality population by safeguarding the health of mother and child.

A study on the Cameroon family carried out in 1988, with the financial support of the World Bank, enabled us to identify the major challenges facing the family in my country. Foremost among them is poverty, the greatest obstacle to the family's assuming with dignity its basic socio-educational, health and economic functions and practising family planning. The family's role has been enhanced recently by the implementation of structural adjustment programmes, which have been extended to social strata that in 1986 could be said to have risen above the poverty line.

A second challenge is the breakdown of value systems, a result of the cultural shock created by the conflict between tradition and modernity. This is a fundamental problem, gradually becoming more acute with the development of a global culture created by the growth of mass media and modern systems of communication and telecommunication.

Those challenges, along with many others, affect the structure and functioning of the family in Cameroon, with the following consequences: first, a progressive weakening of the institution of marriage as the basic element of the fundamental family unit; secondly, a marked weakening of the bonds of family unity and of the social control hitherto exercised over its members, particularly the children, by adults — in this case, parents.

The study, along with others on poverty, has enabled the Cameroon Government to improve its strategy for educating the people on responsible parenting. That strategy, drawn up in the framework of the national population policy and implemented through social centres, is designed to improve family function by educating individuals, couples and communities on family living, sexual life, family planning and community living for development. It has also enabled us to target various policies to reduce poverty, to make the family the true foundation of social stability and national integration and to reach a better understanding of the place of women in various development programmes.

The family code now being drawn up will, when adopted, provide a more solid legal basis for this strategy so that the family in our society will become the special place in which ideals of human development can be formed and take root.

Cameroon is pleased that since the New York Summit for Children in 1990 the health of mothers and children has become — more than in the past — a concern of the international community, even if my country regrets the lack of additional resources from agencies on the system in support of programmes in this area.

The United Nations initiative to declare 1994 the International Year of the Family and to organize this Conference on Families only a few months before the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development has a twofold significance for us.

On one hand, this initiative strengthens our conviction that all forms of sustainable human development that seek to promote the comprehensive well-being of man and his offspring must necessarily reflect the family as the basic unit of society. On the other hand, it strengthens in us the idea that the advancement of family well-being requires the promotion of the various components of the family unit — the father, the mother and the child.

The results of widespread social mobilization around the theme of the family during 1994 and the recommendations of the present Conference on Families are preparing the platform that we should like to see given to the family at the World Summit for Social Development.

The approach of sustainable human development is today challenging the entire international community. A vision of development focusing solely on economics has led to many failures and frustrations and, thereby, demonstrated its limitations. From this forum we should welcome the United Nations initiative, undertaken since 1990, to issue the human development index for each country. That index, because it is the product of economic and social indicators, is a better reflection of a country's state of development.

Despite socio-economic difficulties in our countries, families continue to be the last refuge for many of their members — a place where those people can still hope to rediscover the meaning of humanity and a real spirit of solidarity. Those two values are particularly lacking in interpersonal relations today. We believe that a form of development focused on the advancement of the family will make it possible to restore them and, through the dynamic of the family, will help to reintroduce them into the community as a whole as a means of reorienting national and international development by putting it on a foundation that is more respectful of mankind and of the whole person.

The consensus that is taking shape at the international level on the need to replace economic development with human development; the keen interest that the international community is showing in issues pertaining to children, women, the family, protection of the environment, human rights and issues of governance; and the conviction of the need for solidarity, the clearest proof of which is the end of East-West antagonism — these are all gains in the international context that give us hope that we can believe in development with a human face through transfers of resources released as part of the peace dividend to programmes aimed at reducing poverty and strengthening the family.

We must make it possible for the family to realize its full human potential so that that hope may become a reality.

**The President:** The next speaker is the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Abdu Hadid, on whom I now call.

**Mr. Abdu Hadid** (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic):* It is a great pleasure for my delegation to see such a host of distinguished representatives celebrating the International Year of the Family. This attests to the extreme importance of the family as the principal building block of society and of the international community at large.

I should like, on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic, to give a brief overview of the activities and plans of action adopted by my country in celebration of the International Year with a view to bolstering the ethical, cultural, humanitarian and social values which underlie the family institution. I should like also to quote the wise words of President Hafiz al-Assad:

> "When interaction and integration are fully achieved between man's endeavours within the family and man's productivity at work, then we are on the threshold of a new stage of social development."

The National Committee set up by my country to plan and coordinate activities for the International Year of the Family, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund, has organized a number of national seminars, and it has adopted several recommendations related to the health, educational, social, legislative and information fields, in keeping with authentic Arab principles and values, which dignify and protect the family as the basic cell of human society.

Protection of the family is the joint responsibility of the family itself, the State and society. Parents have very specific responsibilities — protection of the family and caring for its members; avoidance of the causes of family disintegration; and abstention from the practice of any kind of gender discrimination against any family member, one purpose of which is to ensure that sons and daughters are given equal educational opportunities to enable them to develop appropriately.

On the other hand, the State and society at large have to endeavour, by various means, to protect the family against weakness and disintegration.

First, by creating the appropriate social, economic, legislative and psychological conditions that would enable the family to continue to play its proper role;

Secondly, by adopting appropriate policies to ensure the cohesion and stability of the family in order for it to interact positively with the objectives of development, while avoiding excessive consumerism;

Thirdly, by offering more assistance, support and protection to the family, especially in the remote areas, through the provision of high-quality development-oriented social services. The phenomenon of delinquency could be avoided through the adoption of the well-known mechanisms of social defence.

Proceeding from these principles and beliefs, allow me to convey to you the most important recommendations adopted and implemented:

At the level of health care, increasing the number of primary health programmes so as to make them accessible to each and every member of the family, in the context of the overall objective of "health for all by the year 2000"; further expansion of preventive health services and medical treatment, as well as protection of children and mothers; increasing support for grassroots and private organizations so that they may play their roles in promoting family awareness, especially in the area of family planning; and lastly, increasing the awareness of the family as to the dangers of drugs, AIDS and other diseases, and as to how one can protect the family and its members from such ills.

At the educational level, we have decided to adopt an integrated educational approach, that ensures full interaction between the family itself, school and society, in order to prepare the present generations for the future. We have decided also to expand our illiteracy campaigns beyond mere literacy or numeracy, and have focused primarily on parents, in order to eradicate all forms of illiteracy at the educational, social, economic and cultural levels. We have decided to carry out field studies to highlight the important role played by parents in the education of their children, especially their daughters; and have decided to prepare guides for parents explaining how to deal with their children and orienting them educationally, socially and in terms of health. At least one practical lesson per week will focus on the upbringing of children under the supervision of health-care specialists and social workers.

At the social level, we decided to increase the protection offered by the State to the family so as to satisfy the family's basic needs and provide it with social guarantees so that it may be able to bring up its children properly and, thereby, to contribute to the building and development of society. Efforts will be redoubled towards the formulation of plans that would help families achieve social stability and raise their standards of living through expanded social services, especially in low-income and rural areas. Social services provided to various families will be expanded through the creation of new social institutions, consultation and guidance centres. The number of nurseries and kindergartens operated by Government and popular institutions is being increased. The needs of mothers at home are being provided in order for them to participate more fully in the process of

development. Appropriate technology in rural areas is introduced at a much larger scale in order to increase agricultural production for local consumption and to improve living standards in the rural areas, thereby improving conditions on the whole.

At the legislative level, we encouraged more support for the role of the family in solving its own problems, updating national legislation whenever necessary in keeping with social and economic development policies and with an eye to achieving sustainable development. We also updated family legislation in Syria in keeping with changed national circumstances, both at the social and economic levels.

In the area of information, we have focused on the importance of mass media in educating the family and increasing its awareness. To this end, we have adopted very clear information policies to protect the family and its members from delinquency.

Allow me to convey the recommendation made by the Syrian National Committee for the International Year of the Family, supporting the proposal adopted by the Arab Conference on Human Rights, held in Cairo at the beginning of this year, namely, to change the date of the celebration of the International Day of the Family to a date other than 15 May, because 15 May coincides with a very painful date in the history of our Arab nation.

Finally, I would call upon all of you to support the principal nucleus of our society, the family, because protecting the family means protecting and ensuring the safety of human society as a whole.

**The President**: I call now on the Permanent Representative of Brazil, Mr. Ronaldo Sardenberg.

**Mr. Sardenberg** (Brazil): At the outset, I wish to indicate that the delegation of Brazil fully subscribes to the statement made today by the Permanent Representative of Paraguay on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. I would like to take this opportunity to add a few remarks to specify the Brazilian perspective on the International Year of the Family.

These are times of extraordinary change: the globalization of the world economy, the quick access to information, the growing rhythm of urbanization, as well as the increasing awareness that events in different areas of the globe can affect the standards of living of societies thousands of kilometres apart, all these phenomena affect the family.

Through the ages the family has played a role in the process of socialization and education, the paramount importance of which need not be further emphasized. Today the family is coming to grips with the challenge of having to adapt quickly to an ever-changing environment. It is not immune to the new economic, social and cultural realities.

The viability of our societies in the future and the well-being of our descendants will depend on our ability to cope with this process of adaptation directly, so as to avoid a possible trend towards the disintegration of the family structure.

The role of family life in society is manifold. It is at the family level that solutions can be found to many of the social ills of our times. Because it is the core structure in society, it retains potential as a fundamental tool in the formulation and implementation of policies in areas such as education, health, and sanitation.

Given these challenges and possibilities, we consider it entirely appropriate that the international community and the United Nations should devote significant efforts to addressing issues of concern to the family. Brazil joined the consensus that resulted in resolution 44/82, launching the International Year of the Family, aimed at promoting increased awareness of family issues and at improving the institutional capability of countries to tackle family-related problems with comprehensive policies.

*The President returned to the Chair.*

From the standpoint of public policies, it is important to stress that a fragmented approach to family issues — children, youth, the elderly and disabled persons, for instance — does not necessarily provide the response required by the family unit in permanent interaction. Public policies aimed at specific segments of the population cannot fail to consider the concrete living conditions and survival strategies of family groupings, which vary according to their position within the social structure.

The Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 dedicates an entire chapter to the family. It establishes the basic framework for family-related policies. Our Constitution considers the family as the basis of society, and provides for special protection and support by the State. The family, together with the State, bears primary

responsibility for respect for the rights of the child and the adolescent.

Six years have elapsed since the promulgation of the Brazilian Constitution, which can claim the status of a legal landmark on its handling of family issues. The passing of other important pieces of legislation in Brazil also deserve to be mentioned. They include the Statute of the Child and Adolescent, the Organic Law for Social Assistance and the National Policy on Ageing. There remains, however, a significant gap between the law and the reality faced by families in Brazil. Government and society alike are doing their utmost to bridge this gap in order to allow all families to enjoy the benefits of social and economic development.

In order to carry out the activities pursuant to the International Year of the Family, an Interministerial Committee was established by President Itamar Franco for the formulation of Brazilian policy on the family. In September a debate was conducted in Brasilia on the National Plan for the Brazilian Family.

The Brazilian National Plan sets the principles and strategies for our national policy in this domain, defining areas of responsibility of the various Ministries. The national policy will be coordinated, at the federal level, by a permanent commission composed of 10 Government representatives and 10 representatives of interested non-governmental organizations. The Commission also includes representatives of the States of the federation and of municipalities.

The main guidelines of this Plan include participation of the family in the formulation, implementation, follow-up and assessment of Government policies and programmes; respect for social and cultural diversity; and the need for appropriate funding at all Government levels to finance activities related to the family.

In 1992 Brazil hosted one of the international meetings aimed at discussing special chapters of the Declaration on the Rights of Families, which is scheduled to be launched in December this year, in the context of the initiatives promoted by the International Union of Family Organizations. The meeting in Brazil was an important preparatory event where topics regarding the economic rights of the family were discussed.

On behalf of the Brazilian delegation, I would like also to stress the importance of the Declaration of Cartagena, issued by the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting in preparation for the International Year of the Family. Among many relevant points, the Declaration states the willingness of the countries of the region to

> "transform the family into a prime agent of programmes aimed at specific population groups, incorporating the dimensions of gender, age, status, ethnic origin and level of vulnerability." *(LC/G.1777(CONF.84/5, p. 31))*

The International Conference on Population and Development, in which Brazil participated constructively, dedicated one chapter of its Programme of Action to the diversity of family structures and composition and the required socio-economic support. The Programme of Action recognizes that the process of worldwide rapid demographic and socio-economic changes has influenced patterns of family formation and family life, thus generating considerable change in family composition and structure. It also admits that widespread migration caused by conflicts, urbanization, poverty and natural disasters has placed great strains on the family. Governments should take these realities into consideration when formulating socio-economic development policies, programmes and legislation aiming at contributing to the stability of families. Families are increasingly vulnerable. Single-parent families headed by women, poor families with elderly members, refugee and displaced families, among others, deserve special attention.

The Cairo Programme of Action recommends that Governments should provide the necessary support and protection for these most vulnerable families. They should also formulate family-sensitive policies in the areas of health, education, employment, housing and social security.

My Government is committed to implement programmes and actions recommended by the Cairo Conference, and is considering an entire set of measures focused on the family. We are motivated by the realization that this basic institution must receive comprehensive support.

In concluding, I would like to emphasize that the enormous tasks ahead of us concerning family issues must gain proper international attention throughout the United Nations system as well as other institutions, especially those dedicated to the promotion of social and economic development.

**The President** *(interpretation from French)*: In accordance with the decision taken yesterday afternoon, I now call on the Observer of the Holy See, His Eminence Alfonso Cardinal Lopez Trujillo, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

**Cardinal Lopez Trujillo** (Holy See) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Thank you very much, Mr. President, for this opportunity that is offered to the Holy See.

This meeting is taking place in the International Year of the Family, proclaimed by the United Nations and celebrated by the Catholic Church in the various nations of the world with particular enthusiasm.

In Rome, on 8 and 9 October, significant events took place in connection with the World Meeting of Families with Pope John Paul II, when an immense multitude — like a sea into which abundant tributaries flowed — of nearly 200,000 pilgrims from almost every country in the world filled St. Peter's Square.

This celebration was preceded by numerous activities carried out in all countries, showing the vitality of the family. The Rome meeting with the Pope was thus a demonstration of hope placed in the energies of the family, based on marriage as a community of life and love, characterized by the reciprocal self-giving of a man and a woman, a husband and wife, in a free and stable — until death — responsible way that is open to life. Children are indeed God's most precious gift to marriage.

In the Catholic Church the Charter of the Rights of the Family, prepared by the Holy See, is the instrument that has been used as the basis for work and dialogue. It incorporates the principal aspects of and points on the matter, based on a rich conception of fundamental human rights, because the rights of the family are a systematic manifestation and application of the natural law in reference to the family community, the vital foundation of society.

During this Year it has been possible to study in depth what the family entails as the vital basis of society and to draw the consequences for both the personal and social spheres and for the life of humanity in the network of the human family. It would not be logical or coherent to state and recognize that the family is the basic unit of the social fabric and then to deny or weaken its status as a true social subject, with its own particular sovereignty, rights and duties.

Pope John Paul II refers to these vital themes in his rich *Letter to Families*, his gift to the human family on the occasion of this International Year.

At a recent meeting in Rome with many families from all around the world we were able to verify the deep convergence between the most varied religions regarding the fundamental values of the family. It could not be otherwise, for the family is the heritage of mankind through which the future of society on our planet necessarily passes.

It is very important to bring together similar manifestations in the cultural heritage of our peoples. In the *Nichomachaen Ethics* we can read the following reflections:

> "Friendship between husband and wife is recognized; it is natural; in fact, by nature, man is more inclined to live as a couple than to associate politically, because the family is something prior to, and more necessary than, the State".
> *(Nichomachaen Ethics, VIII, 15-20)*

This text, as is well known, was written 350 years before Christ by Aristotle.

Throughout history attempts have been made to defend and to help the family community, in which the good of the spouses, the children and society is ensured. I do not wish to dwell on this aspect for too long, but what would be the future of children, their harmonious development, their upbringing in the sense of an integral education, and their dynamic and positive inclusion in society, if they were not born and raised in a family, as a responsible union of hearts under one roof, as we see it in the United Nations symbol for the International Year of the Family? Are not the strength of the family and its protection the best guarantee for respecting children, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Children are the first victims of instability and erosion. They are innocent victims, who have the right to their parents' generous and self-sacrificing love, their example, and an education of which their parents' behaviour is a necessary condition.

Today all kinds of very high social costs are being paid, either because millions of children do not have families or, as the Pope says, because they are like orphans with living parents.

In this International Year we are called upon to confirm and implement, as is appropriate and necessary, one fundamental principle: the family based on marriage is a value proper to this natural institution, willed by God, and inscribed in the depths of human nature. It is a value, I repeat, as the Second Vatican Council notes, for spouses, children and society.

The family is not a private matter and situation; it has social importance that is not derived from any concessions or generosity of the State. We have had occasion to observe, on the one hand, what some nations have achieved, and on the other, a systematic emptying of family policies and legislation worthy only of the name in many countries. A number of documents of the International Year refer to the requirement to deal with this.

An adequate family policy requires that the family be recognized and helped as a social subject, one that integrates each and every one of its members — the man and woman, husband and wife, sons and daughters, babies, youth, the elderly, the healthy and the sick.

We have been able to work more vigorously for the members of the family who also deserve appropriate assistance of a social nature that is in harmony with, and not in opposition to the family as an integrating body or community.

Together with the repeated desire for real recognition of the rights of the family and necessary positive family legislation, to which Pope John Paul II and the Catholic Church are very committed, I should like to express the hope for a decisive, enthusiastic and universal defence of the family by those who govern. If they act in this manner they will be encouraging harmony with the good of the family, society and the common good, which must be ensured for all mankind.

During the preparatory process for the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo, His Holiness the Pope expressed concern regarding the treatment of the traditional form of the family. The Holy See is pleased to note that in the principles of the Cairo document, the basis for interpreting and understanding the whole text it is clearly stated in principle 9 that

> "the family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened. It is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support."

The same principle goes on to say:

> "Marriage must be entered into with the free consent of the intending spouses, and husband and wife should be equal partners."

That principle must inspire all family policy and any true demographic policy.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Henryk Sakolski, the Coordinator of the International Year of the Family, who was with us at the World Meeting of Families with the Pope, for the diploma he gave me designating the Pontifical Council for the Family as a co-sponsor of this International Year.

Finally, I transmit the paternal and hopeful greetings to all assembled here — and their families — from Pope John Paul II, the Pope of the family, the Pope of life.

**The President** *(interpretation from French):* The General Assembly has thus concluded this International Conference on Families devoted to the implementation of the follow-up of the International Year of the Family.

I should like to thank all the high-ranking individuals and the non-governmental organizations that have come to the United Nations Headquarters in New York to express their view of the importance of the family in the world today. We hope that this enterprise will be continued.

**Agenda item 152**

**Observer status for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the General Assembly: draft resolution (A/49/L.3)**

**The President** *(interpretation from French):* I call on the representative of Australia to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/49/L.3.

**Mr. Rowe** (Australia): It is my honour to introduce, on behalf of the sponsors, the draft resolution contained in document A/49/L.3 of 17 October 1994, by which the General Assembly would invite the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of Observer.

The 100 Member States which sponsored this draft resolution are listed in document A/49/L.3. To these should be added Albania, Azerbaijan, Chad, China, Comoros, Dominica, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Nicaragua, Niger, Paraguay, Republic of Moldova, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Tajikistan, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam, making a total of 129 sponsors.

The basis on which the International Federation is seeking Observer status in the General Assembly is contained in the explanatory memorandum in document A/49/192. The sponsors wish to draw the attention of the members of the General Assembly to the following points in particular.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (formerly the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), founded in 1919, is the federation of 162 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies throughout the world. It acts under its own Constitution with all the rights and obligations of a corporate body with a legal personality. Its secretariat is based in Geneva.

A recent survey established that the member societies of the Federation together represent some 127 million volunteer members, with approximately 270,000 employed staff.

In accordance with its Constitution, the Federation is the official representative of its member societies in the international field, the guardian of their integrity and the protector of their interests.

The functions of the Federation, endorsed by States when they adopt the Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, are, *inter alia*: to bring relief by all available means to all disaster victims; to organize, coordinate and direct international relief actions and to assist the national societies in their disaster relief preparedness; to bring help to victims of armed conflicts in accordance with the agreements concluded by the International Committee of the Red Cross; to encourage and promote in every country the establishment and development of an independent and duly recognized national society; and to carry out the mandates entrusted to it by the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which brings together Governments and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent movement.

With an average of well over 400 delegates working in 12 regional and 53 country delegations, the Federation secretariat, with the support of its member societies that provide the major part of the funds, relief consignments and personnel, has been active in 1994 throughout the world, providing assistance to victims of disasters and sustaining development programmes.

In 1994, programmes coordinated through the International Federation are assisting 19.2 million beneficiaries in Africa, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and the Americas.

In addition to these emergencies-related programmes, millions of others are assisted through national activities ranging from disaster preparedness, maternal and child health, first aid, women and development, youth and social programmes aimed, in particular, at improving the situation of those who are most vulnerable.

The agenda and tasks of the Federation and the United Nations increasingly complement one another and interact with increasing frequency.

A particularly close cooperation has over the years evolved with the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has given particular focus to the humanitarian agenda within the central United Nations organs. The role and functions of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs are today of direct relevance to the mandates of the Economic and Social Council, as well as to those of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Federation, having been invited, together with the International Committee of the Red Cross, to participate in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, could make an enhanced contribution, through the provision of advice and expertise, to these United Nations organs as they strive for effective coordination of humanitarian relief, if it were to be granted observer status.

Moreover, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement practises a close cooperation between its components both in the field and at the secretariat level. It would be beneficial to the General Assembly to increase the effectiveness of the Movement as a whole by admitting the Federation as an Observer, thereby

complementing the contribution of the International Committee of the Red Cross in terms of its different mandate, as well as of its know-how and operational capacity.

The Federation has a specificity similar to that of the United Nations in building its membership on the principle of one country — one member. Both promote universality as a leading principle. The Federation is an international organization composed of member societies, the unique character and mandate of which has been defined, at the national as well as the international level, by nearly all the States that are also the very Members of the United Nations. This represents, both in substance and in structure, a unique position in the international community.

As a humanitarian organization which is involved globally, on a huge scale, in disaster-relief operations as well as day-to-day health and social programmes, the Federation considers that it would be important and mutually beneficial to have the opportunity to participate as an Observer in the work of the General Assembly when policy on humanitarian issues is being developed and discussed. In addition, Federation observer status in the General Assembly would be of mutual benefit to the two organizations and above all to disaster victims, as it would further strengthen the communications and operational cooperation between the United Nations and the Federation.

The special and unique features outlined above and in the explanatory memorandum and the shared common humanitarian task of the United Nations and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies provide strong justification for according the Federation observer status.

Accordingly, on behalf of the 129 sponsors, representing in numbers over two thirds of the membership of the United Nations, and in geographical terms all the regions of the world, I request that the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution, which would grant observer status for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the General Assembly.

**The President** *(interpretation from French):* I now call on the representative of Gambia, who will speak on behalf of the African States.

**Mr. Jallow** (Gambia): On behalf of the African Group of States and of my own delegation of the Gambia, I have the pleasure to express our support for draft resolution A/49/L.3 on observer status for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the General Assembly.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has over the years proved its universal vigilance in quickly reacting to emergency situations all over the world. The nature and extent of the Federation's activities, which cover every facet of our lives, either directly or indirectly, have continued to receive international acclaim.

The universality of the work of the Federation is complemented by the international nature of its membership, drawn from 162 countries. The organization has therefore been working closely with relevant United Nations agencies in the field of humanitarian activities. The Federation has played a heroic humanitarian role in conflict areas and disaster situations, which have continued to grow in number and frequency in recent years. Sometimes the severity and complexity of the conflict or disaster situation make these tasks not only daunting, but dangerous. This notwithstanding, the Federation has continued, guided by its overriding principles of neutrality and impartiality, its uninterrupted service to humankind, bringing its healing powers to the millions of victims — maimed and often homeless — of wars and natural disasters.

It is in recognition of these attributes and achievements of the Federation, its adherence to the basic tenets of the Charter of the United Nations and its willingness to serve whenever and wherever necessary throughout the world, that we recommend the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution before us, in order to make it possible for us to welcome the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to participation in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

**Mr. Mongbe** (Benin) *(interpretation from French):* Benin, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak, is honoured that its name appeared on the impressive list of countries which joined in signing the letter requesting the inclusion of agenda item 152 on the agenda of this session and that it is a sponsor of draft resolution A/49/L.3, which would grant the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies observer status in the General Assembly.

It is no secret that the Federation is the largest and best-known humanitarian organization in the world, with

its 162 member national societies, which their respective Governments find very useful and highly appreciate. Since the end of the First World War, the emblem of the Federation has been respected throughout the world for its universality, neutrality, self-sacrifice and ability to prevent and mitigate the sufferings of the weakest, the most vulnerable and victims of every kind of atrocity.

My delegation endorses all the observations which my friend, the Ambassador of Australia, has just made in his eloquent introduction of the draft resolution before us, and those made by Ambassador Jallow of Gambia, who has just spoken on behalf of the African Group.

I would simply point out that, in addition to programmes involving coordinated emergency assistance by the International Federation to 19.2 million beneficiaries in Africa, Europe, Asia and America, national activities covering many areas — disaster preparation, mother- and child-care, blood transfusions, first aid, youth programmes and social programmes for vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, the sick and the infirm — all provide help to millions of others.

At a time when the United Nations is becoming more dynamic in its humanitarian assistance through the creation and consolidation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, it would be advantageous to strengthen cooperation between the International Federation and the General Assembly and to broaden and enhance the Federation's existing relations with several specialized agencies of the World Organization.

My delegation believes that the unique characteristics of the International Federation, which the representative of Australia described a few moments ago, along with the humanitarian tasks it shares with the United Nations, are sufficient to grant it observer status in the General Assembly.

My delegation praises the determination of all those delegations which supported the Federation's candidacy and commends the spirit of cooperation of all the other delegations which, hesitant at the outset of the process, agreed to negotiate with a view to finding a *modus vivendi* with the former.

Admitting the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to the General Assembly with observer status will be a step forward towards dealing in a more coordinated and thus effective manner with the many humanitarian problems that so often defy the capacity and credibility of our Organization.

**Mr. Thanarajasingam** (Malaysia): My delegation has consistently supported the application of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for observer status in the General Assembly. The agenda item we are considering today is the culmination of the efforts of the international community to accord this status to the Federation.

We wish to underline that the Federation fully deserves the status it is seeking. As the only international organization with representation by a large majority of Governments and one that is governed by statutes drawn up by Governments and organizations, it fully deserves the status that is being sought on its behalf by more than 120 countries from all regions.

With this status, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies would be well placed to enhance its collaboration with the United Nations, the United Nations specialized agencies and the United Nations sanctions Committee. Granting observer status to the Federation would also facilitate and strengthen its ability to network with target groups in providing urgently needed humanitarian assistance.

Mr. President, my delegation wishes to record its appreciation of your personal involvement in resolving this issue. The Permanent Representative of Australia deserves our appreciation as well. We recall the problems encountered earlier, and we are happy that a consensus acceptable to all was eventually achieved.

In conclusion, we would like to join Australia and the other 127 sponsors in commending the draft resolution formally endorsing observer status for the Federation.

**Mr. Kovanda** (Czech Republic): Let me be brief and to the point.

My delegation chairs the Eastern European Group of States this month, which is a great honour for us, but I am speaking here on behalf of my delegation only.

The Czech Republic is privileged to have co-sponsored draft resolution A/49/L.3, inviting the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to become a permanent observer in the General Assembly. We find the Federation unique; it has

members in 162 countries, and another 23 national societies are expected to be recognized in coming years. Once that happens, the Federation will have more members than our own United Nations, unless we take great care to "adopt" somebody else.

How much more universal can an organization actually be? Statistics about its programme have been listed and mentioned by previous speakers, especially by the representative of Australia, and I will not repeat them. We do, however, note that just over half of the total number of people who benefit from the assistance of the Federation are Europeans. Whether this is an appropriate proportion is another matter, but being European ourselves, we acknowledge this fact with gratitude.

This is a humanitarian organization which is non-sectarian and universal, far closer in its spirit to the principles of a civic society — which are very dear to my country's philosophy — than to the all too frequent recent manifestations of ethnic hatred, religious intolerance and sectarian strife. We appreciate that observer status should not be available even to worthy organizations as easily as buns in a bakery, to quote a Czech metaphor, but we feel that in this case we are talking about an organization that is not only unique, but truly deserving.

We feel that the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is so important that it is an honour for this General Assembly to benefit from the association that is about to take place. And if the Federation derives some use from its observer status with us, all the better.

**Mr. Borda** (Colombia) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I, too, shall be very brief.

My delegation is pleased to be among those that have supported and sponsored draft resolution A/49/L.3, which invites the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to be a permanent observer in the General Assembly. The honour fell to my country, as representative of the Group of 77 and of the People's Republic of China, to call last year for the inclusion of this item on the agenda. We therefore support the views expressed by the representative of Australia in introducing the item today.

The Red Cross and the Red Crescent have, through their dogged and selfless cooperation at the international level, become well-established symbols of humanitarian assistance in aiding the victims of disasters, in addition to victims of conflict, and assisting the neediest and most vulnerable. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, established 75 years ago, is inspired by the same principles of struggle against human suffering. Its present expansion responds to changes in today's world.

The considerable increase in the number of victims needing aid as a result of natural disasters and grave social crises provides additional reason for the existence of the Federation, which coordinates the humanitarian activities of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent at the global level. Moreover, the United Nations humanitarian programme includes many matters with which the International Federation is also concerned. These points of convergence fully justify observer status for the Federation.

It is therefore with special satisfaction that my delegation will welcome the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as a permanent Observer in the General Assembly.

**The President** *(interpretation from French)*: We shall now take a decision on draft resolution A/49/L.3.

I should like to announce that the following countries have become sponsors of the draft resolution: the United Arab Emirates and Grenada.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/49/L.3?

*The draft resolution was adopted* (resolution 49/2).

**The President** *(interpretation from French)*: Before calling on representatives who wish to speak in explanation of position, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Rosenstock** (United States of America): Had there been a vote on the question of granting observer status in the General Assembly to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, my delegation would have abstained. There is a procedure for establishing relationships between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. The procedure is rooted in Article 71 of the Charter, which reads in the relevant part:

"The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations."

Under that Article, and in compliance with it, a detailed procedure has been established, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV). The status of observers in the General Assembly should, in accordance with past practice and consistent with the sense of Article 71 of the Charter, be reserved for States and intergovernmental organizations.

If we continue to depart from that long-standing practice because of intense lobbying by national societies, or in order to respond to a particular organization's desire for what it perceives as equal prestige, we will be departing from the scheme of the Charter. We are also putting in peril the particular rights and privileges currently accorded to observers in the General Assembly. It would certainly be regrettable if the rights and privileges accorded to observers representing States and intergovernmental organizations had to be cut back to avoid jeopardizing the work of the Assembly.

We are pleased that there has been some recognition of these problems. The Assembly has decided to examine the question of criteria for the granting of General Assembly observer status and has established a moratorium on further granting of observer status until criteria are established. We are confident that the Sixth Committee, which has already begun its consideration of this matter, will endorse criteria consistent with the Charter scheme that will allow us to resume a rational handling of these matters.

The issue is not whether a given organization does enormous good work in the field of disaster relief, as the Federation surely does, or in the field of human rights or in combating hunger. The issue is how the United Nations can best recognize the special role of States and intergovernmental organizations and also continue to provide suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations.

**Mrs. Horiuchi** (Japan): While we joined in the adoption without a vote of draft resolution A/49/L.3, entitled "Observer status for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the General Assembly", we would have abstained had it been put to the vote. Our delegation is of the same view as that just offered by the representative of the United States, namely, that, although we highly appreciate the activities of the Federation in the humanitarian field, observer status in the General Assembly should basically be limited to non-Member States and intergovernmental organizations.

In this context, it should be remembered that the observer status of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was conferred on an exceptional basis because of the ICRC's clear mandate and specific responsibilities under the Geneva Conventions. In this respect, we welcome the initiative taken by the Permanent Mission of the United States to establish a working group in the Sixth Committee to consider the question of criteria for granting observer status in the General Assembly. We hope that such criteria will be devised before we consider granting observer status to any other non-governmental organization.

**The President** *(interpretation from French)*: In accordance with resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990, I call on the observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

**Mr. Küng** (International Committee of the Red Cross): The United Nations has just granted the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies the status of observer in the General Assembly. As founder of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which was granted observer status four years ago, warmly welcomes this decision, which pays tribute to the humanitarian activities carried out by the Federation over the past 75 years.

Since its creation at the time of the Paris Peace Conference following the First World War, the Federation has steadily developed its assistance to victims of natural and technological disasters as well as to refugees and other civilians outside conflict areas. It has also invested great efforts in developing national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, whose humanitarian network covers practically all countries in the world today. Its new status will strengthen the relationship and cooperation between the Federation and the entire United Nations system and will allow the Federation to be, within the General Assembly, an advocate for the victims of natural disasters, epidemics, hunger, poverty and underdevelopment — in short, the most needy and vulnerable.

For its part, the International Committee of the Red Cross will continue to plead for the victims of armed conflicts and internal strife, in accordance with the mandate received from the international community, in particular through the Geneva Conventions. We wish to take this opportunity to thank the General Assembly for its continued support and for recognizing the separate but complementary mandates of the Federation and the ICRC.

**The President** *(interpretation from French):* May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 152?

*It was so decided.*

**Statement by the President**

**The President** *(interpretation from French):* When this morning's meeting was called to order eight out of 184 delegations were represented in the Hall; this afternoon when we began at 3.10 p.m. there were 46 representatives present. Tomorrow morning's meeting will begin at 10 a.m. Many speakers are scheduled to speak and I hope that representatives will be in their places at 10 o'clock.

*The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.*